2: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1956
FR5 Ngoni FR5

When the Queen Mother, who had in her husband's lifetime been the big wife of his village and the head of his big house, moved out with her son to his *lunungulu* village, she had the unrivalled distinction of occupying the *indlunkulu*. While her hut was the centre of all hospitality and of ceremonials such as marriages and funerals, she was aware that her daughter-in-law, her son's big wife, was the leading lady of that village by right of being the Paramount's big wife and the mother of his heir. Such a situation could have produced friction between the big wife and the Queen Mother, but informants were shocked at the idea of two women in such positions not being able to control their tempers and adjust any differences which arose. I never saw any visible signs of friction. The Queen Mother and her co-widows in the village seemed aware that their time of active participation in royal village or national affairs was over, and the Queen Mother appeared content to occupy the *indlunkulu*, provide a meeting-place for all the women, and give advice and counsel when invited to do so. Part of her duty in occupying the *indlunkulu* hut was to keep the ritual vessels for sacrificing to the ancestral spirit of her late husband, the former Paramount, and when the sequence of ceremonies after his death had been completed, she looked after his spirit which had been 'brought back' to that hut.

In the central kingdom, when the Paramount Mputa died in Tanganyika, a regent took care of the kingdom while his son Cikusi was a minor. During that period the royal village built by Domwe mountain was a very large one divided into hamlets. The position of Queen Mother was then held by NaMlangeni, formerly the big wife of Mputa, who had a daughter Manga, but no son. A son, Cikusi, born to the next wife, was put into the house of NaMlangeni and brought up there. Golosela Nzunga, the *induna* in charge of her house, was also in charge of the section of the royal village called Ziyembe. When the royal village divided, its constituent hamlets spread out from Domwe and the section called Ziyembe moved to the east towards the escarpment. The head village of the Nzunga clan was built there, and Golosela continued as *induna* for NaMlangeni. She went with him, while Cikusi's own mother went into his *lunungulu* village in the section called Liwisini sited near the Kirk Range. NaMlangeni took care of the spirit of Paramount Mputa in the Nzunga clan head village of Mcakatha. Her hut in that village was the *indlunkulu* and after she died her daughter Manga came to live in that hut and look after her father's spirit.

This brief account of the succession of a Queen Mother in the central kingdom brings up the question of succession, which was a vital element in the office of the Queen Mother, in respect both of her occupancy of the *indlunkulu* and her guardianship of the spirit of the dead Paramount. In the case of a successor to the Queen Mother of a recently deceased Paramount, two alternatives were open. The reigning Paramount's big wife could succeed to the *indlunkulu* and to the

2: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1956
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group consisted of himself and the mother and her children, including her daughters only until they married. 571 592

The affinal element in a house consisted of the other wives associated with the owner of the house as co-wives, and the wives of the sons of the owner. Both the kinship group and the affinal group were bound together by their rights in the cattle of the herd which was known as 'the cattle of the house of X'. From that herd were taken cattle for the *lobola* of the wives married after the house was founded, and for the wives of the sons and adopted sons of the house. Into that herd came the cattle received for the marriages of the daughters belonging to the house and the gift cattle sent to wives by their fathers after marriage. When the *lobola* had been fully paid up for a daughter of the house, then her relationship with it ceased and she was thenceforth known as belonging to her husband's mother's house. 592 585 571 [591]

Associated with the house in the villages of the Paramounts, the chiefs and the leading *abamnumzana* were two other groups of people. One was the *induna* appointed 'to take care of the house' and his family. In the 1930's the *induna* was in charge of the cattle and of the many activities connected with the house, including the organisation of male labour in hut-building, in kraal construction and in cultivation; he was consulted by the male members of the house about the selling of cattle and the use of the goods accumulated in the house. The other group associated with the house in pre-European days consisted of captives taken in war and allocated to the house who worked as labourers. The servants who worked for a house in the 1930's assisted with cooking, beer-making and minding the children, and they had huts near that of the owner of the house to which they belonged, placed on the right- or left-hand side of the kraal according to their affiliation with the big house or the second house. Informants said that in the past such association with a house included giving a beast from the herd of the house for the marriage of a servant. The *induna*, through the marriage of his daughters, built up his own herd, which he frequently kept at first with the cattle of the house in the main kraal, later building his own kraal. 592 571 357 [727]

A new house began when a man married his big wife. Although at first he built her a hut at the back of his mother's hut in his father's village, as soon as he moved out to his new village after his father's death, the big wife's hut had the next most important site in the kraal after that of the *indhlunkulu*, and the second wife had the third place of importance. In some of the larger villages of the central kingdom, the custom of moving out into a new village after the death of the former owner had been given up, partly because of pressure on the land. The house grouping in relation to the siting of huts then became very complex, but the pattern was nevertheless discernible. The two sections under the big house and the *gogo* house, which had formerly divided into two villages, continued to exist together, and at Mcakhatha this dual 361 591 592 [768] 361 592

2: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1956
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binding contract. In theory at least the girl left her family for good once the agreed *lobola* was handed over, and the responsibility for adjustment to the family she had entered was hers, first as wife and then as mother.

Investigation of the terminology associated with the Ngoni concept of family immediately poses problems of relating group structure to individual and group relationships. Dr. Kuper did not refer to any single term for family among the Swazi. The nearest was the term *umuti* used for homestead[1] which covered a recognized leader and his dependents, in terms of common residence, mutual relations and economic activities. The Cewa term *banja*,[2] widely used in Nyasaland in the 1930's to translate 'family', in its general use was more akin to the Swazi *umuti* since it denoted the relationships of a group of people to one man, and their common residence in a single village or a section of a village. *Banja* was used to express relationship to one man by kinship and marriage, but when it was used among the central Ngoni it also applied to other individuals, such as his age mates and the descendants of his father's former captives who lived in the same village. Another Cewa term *mbumba* was used in two distinct senses. The common use was to express the relationship of one man with his sisters and their children who inherited his position and his property and looked to him for assistance. A much less common use of the term was found sometimes in central Nyasaland and occasionally in north Nyasaland to cover the group of a man and his children and his brothers and their children—a patrilineal concept of a kinship group which was usually but not always associated with common residence.

There was one major difference between the Ngoni concept inherent in their use of *banja* and that of the Cewa and other matrilineal peoples. When an important man or woman died among the Cewa, someone always 'entered their place' in the kinship system, and this acquiring of a new position involved a shift in actual relationships and in terminology throughout the group of kin. There was no such change among the Ngoni in the use of kinship terms. When a man or woman among the Ngoni entered a dead person's place it was in order to perform his functions and not to assume the dead person's kinship relationships.

The village lay-out in different types of Ngoni village illustrates the way in which family grouping could be recognized in the sharing of the same hut, in the grouping of huts, and in the relations with neighbouring villages. Later in this chapter illustrations will be given from the northern and central Ngoni kingdoms to show how certain patterns of residential grouping on a family basis were evolving from the divisions of mixed tribal groups characteristic of the former large villages of pre-European days. The general tendency in northern Ngoniland was to

[1] op. cit. p. 38.
[2] Scott and Hetherwick in their dictionary translate *banja*: house, home, household, family.

The ritual of the purification of the living

The living had certain rites to carry out on their own behalf which, if omitted, would bring the displeasure of the ancestors upon them. These were essentially purification rites for they removed the defilement of death from each individual who was closely related to, or had performed some office for, the dead; and through the rites the houses and utensils were cleansed, and the living community was re-integrated after the loss of one of its members. Shaving, burning the hair and mourning bands, and washing in a stream, were the prescribed acts for all who were connected by kinship or marriage with the deceased, or who had taken part in preparing the body or digging the grave. There were a succession of rites as we have seen, and emphasized the need for ritual cleansing over a long period, and for renewed integration between the living.

In addition to this generally practised ritual, there were some acts of ritual purification of houses and utensils found only among the Swazi clans. One informant told of the ritual washing of hoes used to dig the grave in the blood of a newly killed sheep. Several others spoke of the cleansing with sheep dung of the huts of the widows of a dead man at the time of the second shaving. On each occasion when meat was offered to the ancestors after a death, the living who ate the meat had to be made ceremonially clean through the act of shaving, followed by ritual washing at the river.

The ritual of addressing the spirits

There was no set formula for addressing the ancestral spirits but there were three parts in all the prayers which I heard and which were recited to me. The first was the naming of the ancestors. The leading clans in the two kingdoms demonstrated the way in which they prayed to their ancestors by repeating the names of successive heads of the clan. They began with the name of the ancestor who had died in Swaziland and those of his father and grandfather and other forbears if known. The Nhlane clan, for example, told me 'We pray: *UNdini ka UNcheba ka UMalowu ka UMaxongole*' and then added: 'UNdini died in our village of Hobo before we left Swaziland and he was buried in the kraal in Hobo.' The Mhlambi clan in central Nguniland named their ancestor UNgekwasi who died in Swaziland, but they did not know any names before him. Other clans in the central kingdom used the name of their ancestor who crossed the Zambesi with Mputa. The most important element in the prayer, therefore, was the naming of the 'big spirit', sometimes coupled with more remote ancestors.

The second element in addressing the spirits was to call their attention to the beast which was to be offered to them if they 'agreed'. 'Here is your beast' was the formula. Although three or four beasts or even

in with a smooth round stone. This too was hard work, but every now and then the grandmother, watching and supervising, handed out a lump of clarified fat which quickly brought up a fine polish. The girls were told that this high polish was necessary so that people might sit with pleasure on the floor, and so that all dust and refuse showed up clearly in the morning sweeping of the hut. The floor of the veranda was similarly polished, and, as we saw in Chapter IV, the more important huts had a smeared and polished space all round the front.

In arranging the inside of the hut girls were taught the right places to put the water-jars and other pots, the baskets and mats, and the bundles of cloth and ornaments belonging to the 'house' wrapped in mats or packed neatly in wooden or tin chests. Brass and bead ornaments, and special cloths for use by men and women on ceremonial occasions, were all kept in the huts of leading women. The ornaments worn by such a woman during her lifetime were returned to the 'house' after her death and looked after in the hut of her successor. These possessions and heirlooms were periodically brought out into the sun, and shaken and aired or polished. A housewife was publicly shamed if she did not take care of such property, and people spread stories that she was careless about keeping the wealth of the house in good repair. Girls were reminded of this when they were called to help at such a 'spring cleaning', and told as a warning: 'So-and-so in that village over there, she let the insects eat the cloth of the house. The mildew spoiled the bead-bands and waistcoats. The green rust came on the brass wire. She was shamed when men spoke about it.'

Part of the property of each household was the food stored after harvest or gathered from the bush. Formerly the Ngoni stored their staple cereal in pits dug in the kraal, mudded and fired and covered with a flat rock. The same kind of pit was sometimes made in the side veranda for storing sweet potatoes, but nothing was stored in the kraal.

6:Rattray/E, G-5 (ca. 1900) 1907 FR5 Ngoni FR5

764 and take a large flat stone and set the corpse on it, and take a millstone and place it on his head. If it be he has children, they are made to take charcoal in their hands, and this they cast into the grave (this is to cause them to forget). Then some old man takes up a hoe, and strikes the ground at one side of the grave and again at the other, when many begin to fill in the earth, the chief mourners trampling it down.

III. When they have finished filling in, they knock out the hoe heads, and set off for the stream. They who carry the hoes and household belongings of the deceased go first. When they reach the water, the chief mourners bathe first, then every one else; the men bathe up-stream, the women down-stream. They do not rub each other's backs. When
●768 they have finished bathing, they take the calico, sporran, and "*nsengwa*" baskets the dead man used to eat out of, and set fire to them, and splash the ashes with water. Then they set out for the village, wailing. When they come to the grave, the
[765] medicine man looks for medicine to remove the evil influence of the spirit of the dead; [this medicine] he breaks up, puts in a potsherd, pours on water, and stirs. The chief mourner begins to rub it on his
765 legs, face, and hands, then others come and do the same. If the deceased had children of his own, they also rub some of the medicine on. They again keep wake at the hut in which the man died. Next
[931] morning at dawn the nearest relation of the dead takes goats and fowls and gives them to the chief mourners, who then begin to shave a little patch of hair from the side of each person's head, when the people will then shave each other quite bald. The widows go to some spot in the bush to weave the "red" bands and to shave. When every one has quite finished shaving, the meat is taken from the

10: Barnes E-5 (1946-1949) 1959
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Mpezeni

replaced by new ones, but the village as a whole may be regarded as stationary. The exhaustion of garden land in the vicinity of the village is the principal reason for moving, as with the passage of time a man has to go farther and farther from the village to find new land. Sooner or later it becomes more convenient to move the village to another locality where there is plenty of regenerated land on which gardens can be made. The death of the headman is sometimes followed by a move to a new site, while quarrels within a village may cause a portion of the inhabitants to go off and live on their own, usually after the matter has been referred to the chief. Since 1898 many villages have been moved off land alienated to Whites, or away from congested areas.

When the Administration is the instigator of the move, the new village site is a matter for discussion between District Officer, county chief, and village headman. In moves made on the initiative of the villagers, the various possible new sites are reconnoitred by the headman and other important people in the village and the site chosen is notified to the chief for his approval. The first people start to make their gardens in the vicinity of the site, and work is started on the new village. For this a recently abandoned garden site may be chosen, as it is easier to clear. The first structure to be built is usually a cattle byre. Making a byre is very hard work, and I was told that if it was left till later it would be difficult to get people to tackle the job. Rattray, writing of Gomani's Ngoni of central Nyasaland, relates how the headman's hut is built before the others, but this custom appears to be unknown in Fort Jameson District.[1]

Building is begun by the more industrious before the rains end, and is completed after the harvest. The transition from the old site to the new one is gradual, as, unless the distance between the sites is too great, people will continue working the gardens in the old area until they are exhausted. New gardens are indeed opened up on the old site of the village, and it is quite common to see the ground dug up between the huts at the end of the rains while there are people still living there.

[1] Rattray, *Folk-Lore Stories*, pp. 109–11. Fraser, *Winning a Primitive People*, pp. 203–5, gives an account of the building of a new village among Mombera's Ngoni of northern Nyasaland, in which the cattle byre was built first, but it must be remembered that this was a village built round a central byre, after the fashion of the South-Eastern Bantu, whereas the cattle byre in a Fort Jameson village is nowadays a smaller affair placed on the outskirts of the village.